Mayor Gaynor's Letter

It is not surprising that the papers last week made much of Mayor Gaynor"s letter to his sister about the attempted assassination. That incident had, it is true, been elaborately reported. The newspaper men had had an extraordinary chance to do it justice, for there were so many of them present when it occurred that if it had been arranged especially for their benefit the facilities for describing it and photographing it could hardly have been better. Yet we venture the remark that His Honor's own "story" is the best of them all—and not merely because he was himself the chief figure in it, but because it was the best written. Politicians and people generally may have found this bit of writing valuable mainly from political considerations, but others of us found it absorbing in its own character of vivid and graphic narration. His Honor has a directness and simplicity and quaintness of style that indicates he has not in vain devoted himself to reading the old masters. How much Epictetus has had to do with it we don't know. As Mr. Wegg says in Our Mutual Friend, we "haven't been not to say right slap through him very lately." But His Honor might have turned from John Bunyan or Benjamin Franklin or Plutarch to write that letter—and then turned back again without feeling the need of any particularly humiliating self-abasement.—Harper"s Weekly.

Rule by a Busybody

"He interfered with the course of justice as well as with the course of trade; and set up his own crude notions of equity against the law as expounded by the unanimous voice of the gravest magistrates. It never occurred to him that men whose lives were passed in adjudicating on questions of civil right were more likely to form correct opinions on such questions than a prince whose attention was divided among a thousand objects, and who had never read a law book through. The resistance opposed to him by the tribunals inflamed him to fury. He kicked the shins of his judges. He did not, it is true, intend to act unjustly. He firmly believed that he was doing right and defending the cause of the poor against the wealthy. Yet his well-meant meddling probably did more harm than all the explosions of his evil passions during the whole of his long reign. We could make shift to live under a debauchee or a tyrant, but to be ruled by a busybody is more than human nature can stand."

No; this is not anybody who lives or has lived in the United States of America.

It is Thomas B. Macaulay's description of a monarch known to history as Frederick the Great.—New Beford Standard.

German Cities Are Models

(Engineering News.)

We Americans can profit by studying German street railway practice—and indeed all matters in connection with public welfare in these German cities. It greatly interested me to find that while all the cities on the lower Rhine had municipal ownership and operation of their street railways, in Strassburg the railways are operated by a company. About the only noticeable difference was that the Strassburg cars had advertising placards inside, which was not the case with any of the city-owned cars. Strassburg, it will be remembered also, is in former French territory, and it is an interesting speculation whether the franchise plan in Strassburg represents the prevalence of French ideas and systems instead of German.

It is exceedingly interesting, also to recall that these cities along the lower Rhine were prominent among the places where, in the middle ages, the ideas that lie at the basis of modern democratic society first flourished. It was these cities, growing prosperous from the traffic of the Rhine, that first became strong enough to withstand the "robber barons" in their castles, and finally drove them from these strongholds.

Far back, in the so-called dark ages, the people of these cities learned to stand together for protection against common enemies. They taught some of the first lessons in democracy to the world, and there are, I believe, still other lessons that we can learn from them with profit.

I do not care to draw too close a parallel between the "robber barons" who were overthrown by these free cities of the Rhine and the "robber barons" to whom we in America have bartered the right to control the streets of our cities. I know that, just as in the dark ages many men would have acted exactly like the "robber barons" of the Rhine if they had had possession of their castles, so nowadays many of us would like to take the place of our street railway "barons" and in their places would do likewise. As some wise man said, "Human nature is pretty much of a muchness."

The parallel that it does seem worth while to draw is the parallel between what these German cities did centuries ago in defending themselves from the extortion practiced by the robber barons of the middle ages and the example they are setting to the world today in showing how the public welfare may be promoted by efficient municipal action, in proving by their experience that it is not necessary to pay tribute to "robber barons" of the present day to secure a high degree of public welfare.

As we said, along the Rhine today we see where alongside some of the old castles their baronial occupants erected chapels to salve their consciences and insure their souls against future conflagrations; but these did not avail to save them and their strongholds from passing away with the evolution of a new civilization. On the other hand some of these old-time barons also underwent a process of evolution. Instead of marauders they became public protectors and earned their living by waging warfare against common enemies.

I do not think our modern "barons" can thwart the process of evolution by gifts of libraries and picture galleries. They may, however, by transforming their methods, gain salvation like those old-time barons who survived—by becoming leaders in real public service.

Dangerous Brilliancy

A Boston clergyman says that Mr. Roosevelt's refusal to sit at table with Senator Lorimer "was a brilliant piece of work for any American citizen to do, whether he was an ex-president or not." "Brilliant," perhaps; but with a sort of brilliancy which most persons may safely avoid, and avoid, too, with no question that they are doing right. Mr. Roosevelt may have been entirely justified in indicating his disapproval of the Illinois senator in that particulra form—or he may not. In spite of easily framed opinions, the right of the matter is by no means clear. At any rate, no occasion exists to discuss that point here and now. What we want to say is that those who feel inclined to be "brilliant," as Mr. Roosevelt was brilliant on this occasion, and to administer similar rebuke to those of whom they disapprove, will do well to consider with carefulness before they act. Men and women who profess to regulate their attendance at the feast to which they may be invited by the ideas they have formed of the character of the other guests should remember two things:—first, that human judgments, including their own, are apt to be fallible; second, that others may object to them as much as they object to others. Such thoughts are calculated to chasten the spirit which is anxious to demonstrate its own rectitude by proclaiming and condemning the iniquity that exists elsewhere. Such a course may be brilliant, but there is great danger of its also being conceited and unjust.—New Bedford Standard.